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This is a contribution from *The Evolution of Englishes. The Dynamic Model and beyond*.  
Edited by Sarah Buschfeld, Thomas Hoffmann, Magnus Huber and Alexander Kautzsch.  
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# The evolution of Brunei English

## How it is contributing to the development of English in the world

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Brunei English is changing in ways that seem to reflect global trends in World Englishes, including the occurrence of spelling pronunciation, avoidance of vowel reduction, and use of plurals such as *equipments*. However, some developments in Brunei English may not be so widely shared, including the increasing occurrence of rhoticity and the meaning of words such as *send*. Finally, some features are idiosyncratic, such as the adoption of Malay terms. We can therefore see that Brunei English is participating in the worldwide evolution of English while simultaneously establishing its own identity as a distinct variety. This article describes the ways that Brunei English is changing and discusses how it fits into the model of change proposed by Schneider (2007).

**Keywords:** pronunciation; Brunei English; spelling pronunciation; rhoticity; vowel reduction; borrowing; evolution of language

### 1. Introduction

Brunei is a small country on the north coast of Borneo in South-East Asia, with a population of about 400,000 in an area of 5,765 km<sup>2</sup> (Deterding & Salbrina 2013: 1), making it a little larger than the English county of Norfolk but with less than half the population. From 1888 till 1984, it was a protectorate of Britain, but during that time, although a few missionary schools were established which generally taught in English (Gunn 1997), the language was mostly only used by colonial officials and a small elite, and the dominant language continued to be Malay. However in 1985, immediately after independence in 1984, a bilingual system of education was implemented, with the first three years of primary school taught in Malay and then English-medium instruction being adopted for most subjects from the fourth year of primary school onwards (Jones 2012). Since then all young people in the country have spoken both Malay and English, though there remains a substantial range in the level of English

achieved, with students from the best schools learning to speak and write the language fluently and proficiently, but many students from less fashionable schools only attaining a rudimentary ability (Wood et al. 2011).

The English spoken in Brunei is substantially affected by contact with the dominant indigenous language, Malay, and there may also be some influence from the Chinese dialects that are spoken by about 44,600 (11%) of the population (Deterding & Salbrina 2013: 4). Partly as a result of this influence, there seems to be a tendency to iron out some of the irregular aspects of English usage, so for example the straightforward nature of the Malay spelling system may encourage the adoption of spelling pronunciation in English, and furthermore the relative lack of irregular forms in Malay morphology probably provides some impetus for regularisation in Brunei English morphology.

The two factors just mentioned, language contact and regularisation, might be identified as key stimuli in causing languages to undergo change (Kirkpatrick 2007; Schneider 2011: 26–7). For example, historically, we find that contact with French after the Norman invasion in the eleventh century gave rise to English absorbing a huge number of words from French, including *beef, fool, literature, magic, prince, secret* and many, many more (Algeo 2010: 255). At the same time, regularisation constantly takes place, with the result that complex aspects of the structure of a language tend to become simplified. Consider, for example, irregular verb forms. Verbs such as *brew, chew, shove* and *suck* were once irregular, but now they all take the usual *-ed* past tense suffix (Algeo 2010: 172), even though we occasionally find the reverse process taking place, as *hide* was once regular but it now has the irregular inflections *hid* and *hidden* (Algeo 2010: 171), and *dove* seems to be emerging as a possible past tense for *dive*, especially in the United States, despite this verb historically being regular (Anderwald 2013).

Schneider (2003, 2007) offers an insightful five-phase model of the post-colonial development of English that facilitates the description of the evolution of varieties of the language around the world. However, he makes no mention of Brunei, partly because the country is so small. Nevertheless, we might surmise that Brunei English is in Phase 3 of Schneider's model, a phase labeled as "Nativization", as it is in the process of developing its own norms independent of reference to an external norm, but currently reference continues to be made to external standards of grammar and pronunciation. Indeed, A-level and O-examination papers are still set in the UK and then the scripts are sent to the UK to be graded, and furthermore in Brunei's schools there are now about 260 teachers from Britain, Australia and New Zealand supplied by the CfBT Trust, formerly the Centre for British Teachers (Deterding & Salbrina 2013: 18), though, as we shall see, some of the current influence seems to be coming from American English despite the fact that there are few Americans in Brunei.

Given the small size of the population, Brunei English is unlikely to be having much impact on the ways that English is changing throughout the world. However, many of the trends that can be observed in the evolution of Brunei English seem to resonate with changes that are taking place elsewhere. Furthermore, as nowadays the overwhelming majority of speakers of English are in places that are either in the Outer Circle, such as Singapore, India and Brunei, or in the Expanding Circle, such as China,

Japan and Indonesia (Kachru 2005: 14), the patterns that people from these countries adopt when they speak and write English are likely to have an increasingly important influence on the development of English as it is used around the world (Seidlhofer 2011). Speakers in Inner-Circle countries such as the UK and USA are now in the minority (Crystal 2003: 65), so their dominant position in the evolution of English may be declining.

In this paper, I will describe some of the ways that English seems to be developing in Brunei, particularly with respect to pronunciation, grammar, and the lexicon, and I will further consider the extent to which these changes might be shared with other varieties of English. In this way, an analysis of the current shifts taking place in Brunei English can provide some valuable insights into the ways that the language is changing throughout the world, though at the same time some of the changes are likely to be idiosyncratic to Brunei.

## 2. Pronunciation

There are many ways in which the pronunciation of Brunei English is distinct. Furthermore, it seems to be currently undergoing substantial change, and some of the features of pronunciation found in Brunei may reflect widespread shifts in the pronunciation of English around the world. Here I will just focus on three features of pronunciation: rhoticity, spelling pronunciation, and the avoidance of vowel reduction. However, there are many other features of Brunei English pronunciation, such as use of /t/ at the start of words such as *thin* and *think* and the occurrence of final consonant cluster simplification, which might reflect global tendencies in the pronunciation of English (Mesthrie & Bhatt 2008: 126; Deterding 2010: 372).

### 2.1 Rhoticity

One of the most salient shifts that seems to be taking place in the pronunciation of Brunei English is that the variety is becoming rhotic, so /r/ is pronounced by many speakers wherever “r” occurs in the spelling. Nearly twenty years ago, Mossop made no mention of rhoticity in describing the English of Brunei, except when noting the lack of final /r/ when the vowel in words such as *square* and *chair* is shortened to /e/ (Mossop 1996: 201). However, Salbrina & Deterding (2010) report that about half of all ethnically-Malay female university undergraduates now have a rhotic accent, partly influenced by Brunei Malay which is itself rhotic, but also affected by American English.

Using a new corpus of recordings of university undergraduates that includes ethnically Chinese speakers as well as some males, Deterding & Salbrina (2013: 33) confirm that about half of well-educated young people have a rhotic accent, and though there is little difference between Malays and Chinese, rhoticity is significantly more common among women than men, with 22 out of 38 of the female speakers in their

corpus having a rhotic accent while only 4 out of the 15 males do. If we concur with Trudgill (1995: 70) that women tend to adopt more prestige forms of speech than men, then the greater incidence of rhoticity among women suggests that this feature of pronunciation may be perceived as prestigious in Brunei and it probably therefore reflects one way in which Brunei English is changing. Although correlations between rhoticity and other prestigious features of pronunciation are inconclusive, Deterding & Salbrina (2013: 35) observe that there is no evidence that rhoticity is regarded as a deprecated feature of pronunciation in Brunei, even though one of the key influences is from the dominant indigenous language, Brunei Malay, and transfer interference from a substrate language is usually expected to be avoided by well-educated speakers.

Two sources for the increasing incidence of rhoticity in Brunei have already been suggested: American English and Brunei Malay. There may be a third possibility: use of a rhotic accent reflects the spelling more closely. I will now consider the occurrence of spelling pronunciation in Brunei English.

## 2.2 Spelling pronunciation

The influence of spelling on the pronunciation of words is widespread in all Englishes, especially in the modern age in which most people are literate. For example, *grindstone* used to rhyme with *Winston* (Algeo 2010: 46), but today only /graɪndstəʊn/ is possible (Wells 2008: 354; Jones et al. 2003: 235); the traditional pronunciation of *waistcoat* was /weskət/, but this is now marked as “old-fashioned” by Jones et al. (2003: 584), and /weɪstkəʊt/ is the norm; *forehead* used to be pronounced as /fɔːrɪd/, so it rhymed with *horrid*, but nowadays 65% of people in Britain and 88% of those in America prefer a pronunciation with /h/ in the middle, and the fact that this pronunciation with /h/ is most common among young people suggests it is becoming established as the norm (Wells 2008: 317); and *often* now sometimes has a /t/ to reflect its spelling, although currently only 27% of people in Britain and 22% in America prefer it with /t/, so this is less well advanced in becoming the usual pronunciation (Wells 2008: 560). These four examples represent words at different stages of the emergence of spelling pronunciation: for *grindstone* and *waistcoat*, the process is now almost complete; for *forehead*, it is still incomplete, though the spelling pronunciation is clearly the more common form; but for *often*, the use of a medial /t/ is currently the minority pronunciation.

Spelling pronunciation is particularly common in Brunei, perhaps affected by the increasing use of phonics in teaching (Smith 2011), and also probably influenced by the fact that there is a close relationship between the spelling and pronunciation of Malay, with one of the few exceptions being that “e” can be pronounced as /e/ or /ə/, so *perang* may be pronounced as /perəŋ/ and mean ‘blonde’ or as /pəraŋ/ and mean ‘war’ (Clynes & Deterding 2011: 260). In the Brunei system of education, children learn to read Malay before they learn English (Jones 1996: 125), so it is not surprising if the regular nature of Malay spelling increases the occurrence of spelling pronunciation in the local variety of English.

In their corpus of recordings of 53 undergraduates, Deterding & Salbrina (2013: 41) report that 27 speakers have /v/ in the first syllable of *company*. This use of /v/ instead of the traditional /ʌ/ for a word that is spelled with “o” is similarly found in some words in British English, so *Coventry* nowadays tends to have /v/ in its first syllable (Wells 2008: 192; Jones et al. 2003: 125), and use of /v/ is also listed as possible in the first syllable of *constable* (Wells 2008: 179; Jones et al. 2003: 116). But /v/ in *company* does not (yet) seem to occur in most Inner-Circle varieties of English.

Another word that tends to have a spelling pronunciation in Brunei is *salmon*, which is usually pronounced with /l/ at the end of the first syllable. To investigate this further, thirteen university undergraduates, eight females and five males, were recorded reading the following text:

Sam cleared his debts on Thursday. He planned a feast in the evening to celebrate. The food included salmon and duck. He hoped it would be delicious, but the restaurant provided fish that was not good. In his frustration, Sam smashed the table with his fist.

Of these thirteen speakers, nine say *salmon* with /l/, confirming that it is becoming the norm in Brunei. (In contrast, only four of them have a /b/ in *debts*, suggesting that spelling pronunciation for this word is less common.)

In fact, the pronunciation of *salmon* with /l/ is common around the world. Kilgariff (2010) claims that it is the norm in English as a *Lingua Franca* (ELF) environments, just as *subtle* tends to be pronounced with a /b/. And, as suggested above, the way English is used in ELF environments in the Outer and Expanding Circles may have an increasingly important impact on norms for English in the future (Seidlhofer 2011).

We might further note that the use of /l/ in *salmon* is similar to the use of /l/ in *almond*. Wells (2008: 23) gives the standard British pronunciation of *almond* as /ɑ:mənd/, and the alternative pronunciation with /l/ is marked with the symbol “§” to suggest it is non-RP British English; but he reports that 75% of American speakers prefer a pronunciation with /l/. One might surmise that use of the spelling pronunciation of *almond* will soon become the norm everywhere, and maybe the use of /l/ in *salmon* will follow one day. In this way, Outer-Circle environments such as Brunei might be in the forefront of the evolution of English.

### 2.3 Lack of vowel reduction

There is a tendency in Brunei English to avoid vowel reduction, both in the unstressed syllables of polysyllabic words, such as the first syllable of *convinced* and *succeeded*, as well as in function words such as *of* and *that*. In fact, in the recordings of 53 undergraduates reading a short text analysed in Deterding & Salbrina (2013: 40), every single speaker uses a full vowel in both *that* and *had* in the phrase *a wolf that had just escaped from the zoo*, though we might note that they all pronounce the indefinite article *a* as /ə/, so it is not true that weak forms of function words are completely absent in Brunei.

One consequence of the use of full vowels instead of reduced vowels in unstressed syllables and in function words is that it may serve to enhance the intelligibility of speech in an international setting (Deterding 2010). In an investigation of conversations between nine speakers from different Outer-Circle and Expanding-Circle countries (Deterding 2013), 183 tokens of misunderstandings were found, but only three of these might be attributed to the use of a full vowel instead of a reduced vowel. And overall, the use of full vowels rather than reduced vowels by many of the speakers probably reduced the incidence of misunderstandings in these recordings of ELF conversations. In fact, it is a feature of pronunciation shared by many varieties of English, especially in South-East Asia, where use of full vowels rather than reduced vowels almost certainly helps to avoid misunderstandings occurring (Deterding & Kirkpatrick 2006; Deterding 2010).

#### 2.4 Pronunciation: Summary

There are many distinct features in the pronunciation of Brunei English, but three have been selected for discussion here: rhoticity, spelling pronunciation, and lack of vowel reduction. The reason for this selection is that all three might in fact reflect a similar trend: the pronunciation reflects the spelling more closely, and this may be one reason why these three trends are particularly prevalent in Brunei where all children are familiar with the regular Malay spelling system. While it is not certain that all these three trends are found throughout the world, and in particular it is not clear if the Englishes of places such as India and Nigeria are becoming rhotic, it is likely that the increasing occurrence of spelling pronunciation and the avoidance of vowel reduction reflect widely-shared tendencies in various emergent World Englishes.

### 3. Morphology and grammar

Morphology and grammar are key domains in which regularisation takes place as a language evolves. For example, as noted above, irregular verb morphology tends to get ironed out, and in addition, we find the replacement of syntactic patterns that appear to be idiosyncratic. Here, I will discuss the occurrence of plural nouns like *furnitures* for logically countable things, the use of prepositions after verbs such as *debate*, and the use of *yes* in responses to negative statements.

#### 3.1 Plural nouns

The occurrence of plurals such as *furnitures* is found in many New Englishes around the world (Mesthrie & Bhatt 2008: 53; Schneider 2011: 204). Indeed Hülmbauer (2013) suggests that plurals such as *informations* may be preferred in international settings

because they convey functional meaning even if they do not adhere to the rules of traditional English. And Seidlhofer (2011: 125) notes that the UN General Secretary Ban Ki Moon uttered the phrase *scientific research and evidences* in a 2009 speech, and nobody seemed to have any trouble understanding his use of the plural *evidences*.

In Brunei, we similarly find the use of plurals such as *equipments* and *advices* for things that can be regarded as logically countable. For example, Deterding & Salbrina (2013: 53) report the following occurrence of *infrastructures*, *jewelleries* and *transports* in their corpus of 53 interviews with university undergraduates.<sup>1</sup>

- (1) a. I think it's because of the infrastructures (.) like bi- big buildings
- b. it's just that I don't like jewelleries in s- general
- c. they (.) er use public transports everywhere

In fact, Deterding & Salbrina (2013: 53) further report words such as *researches*, *accommodations* and *lightings* occurring in the English language newspapers in Brunei, which generally try to adhere strictly to native-speaker norms of grammar:

- (2) a. it was conducting researches on the contemporary trends and needs of young people
- b. a travel package for two persons to Singapore including five-star accommodations
- c. most of the stretches are without street lightings

How widespread will such patterns one day become throughout the world, partly stimulated by usage in places such as Brunei? We might note that *mail* is usually regarded as a mass noun, but the plural *emails* seems to have become acceptable nowadays. One might also observe that *researches* seems to crop up occasionally even in America. We can gain a glimpse of this by looking at the occurrence of *research* compared with *researches* in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA 2013). Of course, *researches* could be a verb, so we have to ensure that the search is limited to nouns, and we can do this by looking for strings like *my researches* and comparing the results with *my research*. The results of these searches are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Results of the occurrence of *research* and *researches* in the COCA data

Search string	Tokens	Search string	Tokens
<i>my research</i>	1032	<i>my researches</i>	14
<i>your research</i>	431	<i>your researches</i>	2
<i>his research</i>	1606	<i>his researches</i>	22
<i>our research</i>	1078	<i>our researches</i>	3
<i>their research</i>	1160	<i>their researches</i>	9
Total	5307		50

1. In these extracts, “(.)” indicates a short pause in speech.



These figures show that only about 1% of the tokens have a plural noun for *researches*. Nevertheless, this form does occasionally exist in contemporary American English, and it is possible that its usage will increase in time, partly influenced by its common occurrence in much of the rest of the world.

### 3.2 Prepositions

Prepositions are notoriously difficult for learners of English to master, particularly between a verb and its object. For example, we can *talk about* something, and we can also *complain about* something, so why can't we *discuss about* something? There seems to be no logic here, and not surprisingly there is substantial variation in the ways prepositions occur in international settings. In fact, Cogo & Dewey (2012: 58) note that this use of *discuss about* is an extension of its occurrence with the noun, *discussion about*, so it represents one kind of regularisation.

A similar extension is the use of *on* after the verb *emphasise*. We can talk about *emphasis on* a topic, so why can't we *emphasise on* a topic? And Brunei English-language newspapers sometimes do use *on* following this verb (Deterding & Salbrina 2013: 69):

- (3) a. Syasha also emphasised on the potential of creative industries as job creator.  
 b. she said she always emphasises on following proper rules at all times.

Will this usage be adopted around the world? Cogo & Dewey (2012: 52) note that preposition usage is "inherently unstable", so this is something which may be subject to change. Whether *discuss about* and *emphasise on* become widely accepted in World Englishes remains to be seen.

### 3.3 Responses to negative assertions

In English, if I make a negative assertion such as *It isn't raining*, the standard way of agreeing with it is *No, it isn't*. But this use of *no* to agree with an assertion is often confusing for learners of English, and in some varieties of World English we are more likely to hear *Yes, it isn't*. Indeed, we find this pattern in Brunei, as in the following example from Deterding & Salbrina (2013: 68).<sup>2</sup>

- (4) a. Int: but you don't remember that [now  
 F12: [yes I don't remember

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2. In this extract, "F12" is the Bruneian speaker while "Int" is the British interviewer, and the overlap is shown with "[".

The use of *yes* to agree with a negative assertion seems to be so common in places like Brunei and Singapore that it can already be regarded as the norm in these places. And it seems quite likely that it might one day become the expected usage throughout much of the world. Maybe it already is.

### 3.4 Morphology and grammar: Summary

I have briefly discussed three areas of morphology and grammar where the usage in Brunei English deviates from the native-speaker pattern but the Brunei usage seems perfectly logical. Will these changes become the norm elsewhere? It seems likely that *furnitures* and also the use of *yes* to agree with a negative statement may indeed become widely accepted; but preposition usage is so unstable that it is hard to predict if *discuss about* and *emphasise on* will become established patterns or not.

Indeed, there are many other areas in which innovative usage in places such as Brunei may be a harbinger of the future evolution of English. For example, a sign outside a building in Brunei says *no shoes and slippers inside this building*, with *and* rather than the traditional *or* after the negative *no* (Deterding & Salbrina 2013:124), and this again seems to be common in varieties of World English. It seems likely that innovations such as this one will become the norm throughout the world.

## 4. Lexis

One of the most obvious ways that English may be influenced by other languages is when words are borrowed, and here I will consider the absorption of non-English words into the English lexicon. In addition, I will discuss shifts in meaning that affect the ways that words such as *send* and *bring* are used in Brunei.

### 4.1 Borrowing

English has, of course, adopted words from a wide range of other languages, especially French, German, Spanish, Dutch and Italian, and even basic words such as *sky*, *give* and *window* come from Scandinavian languages (Algeo 2010:253–4).

What about words borrowed from Malay? There are, in fact, a few borrowings from Malay in Standard English, such as *amok* (as in *run amok*), *compound* (as in *police compound*; from the Malay *kampung* ‘village’), *gong* (the musical instrument), *orangutan* (literally ‘forest man’), and *sago* (the sweet, starchy desert). But are there more Malay words that will eventually become absorbed into English?

Brunei English is replete with borrowings from Malay that may only be understood by a local audience and so cannot be regarded as part of international English. For example, when the Sultan gives a speech, it is referred to as a *titah*, the headdress worn by women is called a *tudong*, and the festival at the end of the month of Ramadan

is known as *Hari Raya* (literally ‘celebration day’). These words are commonly found in the local newspapers with no need to gloss their meaning, so *titah* regularly occurs, sometimes in italics and sometimes not, such as in the following extracts (Deterding & Salbrina 2013: 94):

- (5) a. His Majesty in his *titah* stated that as Asean takes on  
 b. The ceremony was followed by a *titah* delivered by His Majesty.

Will they become used more widely elsewhere? It seems unlikely that *titah* will be adopted elsewhere, but maybe some other words from Malay will be. The most likely adoption of words from Malay are for kinds of food, animals and plants, something that is observed to occur in Phase 1 of Schneider’s model (2007). Perhaps *nasi goreng* (‘fried rice’) is already known by many people around the world, and also maybe fruits such as *durian* (literally ‘spiky thing’) and *rambutan* (literally ‘hairy thing’). In addition, some cultural artifacts such as *parang* (‘long knife’) might already be regarded as part of Standard English.

The adoption of words such as these into English is primarily because visitors to Malaysia and Indonesia become familiar with these terms, so Brunei is only playing a minor role. Nevertheless, we can conclude that Brunei English may be contributing in a small way to the worldwide expansion of the lexicon of English.

#### 4.2 Shifted meaning

Some of the words of English may have an unexpected meaning in international contexts. For example, Brown (1999: 36) notes that, in Singapore, *send* has a shift in meaning: if I send you to the airport, I accompany you there, while in Inner-Circle Englishes in places like the UK and USA, I would put you in a taxi and wave goodbye to you. This use of *send* in Singapore seems to be influenced both by Chinese 送 *sòng* and Malay *menghantar*, both of which can be used to refer to sending a letter as well as to accompany a person somewhere, and the same usage is found in Brunei (Deterding & Salbrina 2013: 103). For example, from the recordings of undergraduates, we find:

- (6) a. he sends me off to UBD every day

And from the local newspapers, we find:

- (7) a. The driver of the car was supposed to send the defendant back to his house

Another word with a shifted usage in both Singapore and Brunei is *bring*. In British English, when I go on holiday, I might *take* a book with me, but in Brunei you would *bring* a book with you (even though the destination is not your current location). For example, in the interviews of undergraduates, we find:

- (8) a. my friend (.) er (.) brought me to (.) places (.) in (.) the red light district

Is this pattern of shifted usage for *send* and *bring* likely to influence Englishes around the world? It seems more likely that it will remain a regional pattern, found in Brunei, Singapore and probably Malaysia and Indonesia. For instance, in Singapore, we find examples such as the following (Deterding 2007: 80–2):

- (9) a. she (.) comes by to (.) pick him up and send him elsewhere
- b. my dad will have to help up (.) by erm bringing my niece to school in the morning

Further research is needed to find out how extensive this use of *send* and *bring* might be elsewhere in the world.

### 4.3 Lexis: Summary

In contrast with the trends in the pronunciation and grammar of Brunei English, the lexical innovations seem to be less likely to be adopted throughout the world. While the names of some types of food may become widely known as more people travel around South-East Asia, it seems unlikely that the use of words such as *titah* or *tudong* will become part of Standard English. In addition, the shifted meanings of *send* and *bring* may represent a regional innovation that is not adopted in the rest of the world.

Nevertheless, the frequent occurrence of borrowings into nativized varieties of English is well-established, and also the shifted meanings of words can be found throughout the world. In this way, the lexical tendencies found in Brunei reflect patterns that are widespread in international varieties of English, even if the details remain distinct.

## 5. Discussion

Some of the changes taking place in Brunei English that have been outlined in this paper seem to be shared with other varieties of English, while others are unique to Brunei. In this respect, Brunei English seems both to be contributing to the evolution of English around the world as well as continuing with its own emergence as a distinct variety of English, following the path exhibited by other well-established varieties of English (Schneider 2003, 2007).

The fact that Brunei English seems to be becoming rhotic, partly under the influence of American English, indicates that it may still be subject to influence from external varieties of English. It is noteworthy that American English may be the external influence in this respect, even though most of the foreign teachers in Brunei come from the UK, Australia and New Zealand and have non-rhotic accents. It seems that students in Brunei may be more influenced by the popular media, such as songs and movies, than by the pronunciation of their teachers, though one must also remember the important influence of the rhoticity of Brunei Malay.

Schneider notes (2007:42) that one feature of Phase 3 of his model, especially for varieties of English in South and South-East Asia, is that the colonial administrators have almost all departed, so the continued use of English in each country reflects an appreciation of the value of English in the modern world and a desire to participate in international communication rather than any persistent influence of settlers from the original colonial power. This accurately describes the current situation in Brunei. However, as Schneider also notes in dealing with Phase 3 (2007:40), the “mother country” is no longer much like a “mother”, and this may help to explain why some of the external influence on Brunei English currently seems to derive from American English rather than British English.

Another aspect of Phase 3 noted by Schneider (2007:43) is the tension between conservatives and more innovative speakers, with the former insisting on traditional norms and often deploring modern trends in pronunciation and usage in what has sometimes been described as the “complaint tradition”. Again, this accurately reflects the situation in Brunei, where many well-educated speakers are horrified by the suggestion that it is acceptable for local pronunciation and grammar to deviate from British English norms.

While there continue to be some external influences on Brunei English, at the same time the variety is absorbing lots of words from Malay, such as *titah* and *tudong*, which suggests it is forging its own identity, independent of other varieties of English. This also reflects the nativization of the variety, the central characteristic of Phase 3 of Schneider’s model. However, the fact that such indigenous terms are now accepted in the local newspapers with no need to provide a gloss suggests that Brunei English may be moving towards Phase 4 of the model. Furthermore, the fact that it is now commonly called “Brunei English” rather than “English in Brunei” also indicates its growing status as an independent variety, which confirms that it may be moving into Phase 4 (cf. the terminological discussion in Schneider 2007:50).

Only time will tell how many of the innovations that are found in Brunei English will become widely accepted in Englishes around the world and which ones will constitute distinct markers of this newly emergent independent variety as it increases to assert its own identity while at the same time participating in the global evolution of English.

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